

# **Amazon's Global Shopping Experience**

Exploring the influence of culture on Amazon's web design in the United States and China

## Introduction

Out of all 195 countries in the world today, few countries carry as much global influence as the United States and China. Fig. 1 contextualizes this idea, showing that CEOWorld Magazine ranked the United States and China as the two most powerful countries in the world.

The most powerful countries in the world, 2021

Rank	Country	Score
1	United States	98.09
2	China	94.29
3	Russia	94.11
4	India	93.62

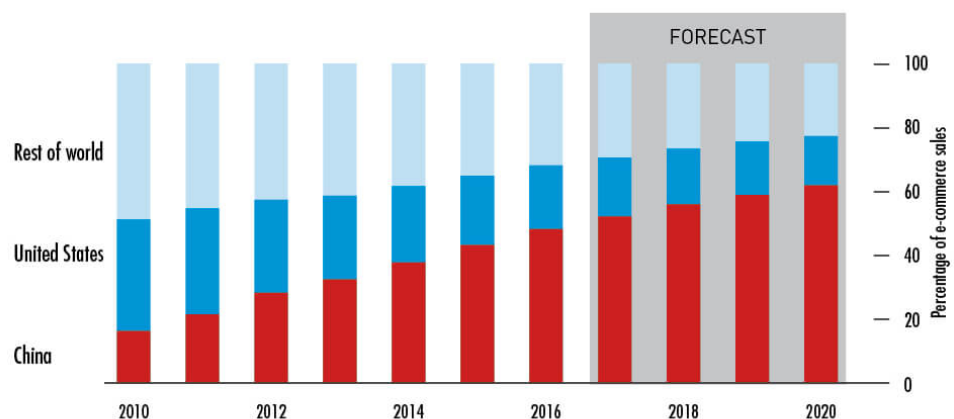
[82 more rows](#) • Jan 2, 2021

Fig. 1. Ranking of the most powerful countries.  
CEOWorld Magazine. Retrieved March 11, 2021. [1]

According to CEOWorld magazine, who published the chart shown in Fig. 1, the most powerful countries are “the ones that constantly shape up the global economic policies and dominate the world,” by using seven attributes: “political stability, economic influence, defense budget, country’s weapons, global alliances, soft power, and military strength” [1]. On the global scale, both the United States and China have an unparalleled social, cultural, and political influence on many major institutions, including international corporations.

For a company like Amazon, Fig. 2. demonstrates how crucial the task of maintaining global popularity among people in a variety of cultures is.

### E-COMMERCE DOMINANCE | Retail e-commerce sales worldwide



Source: eMarketer, The Economist

Fig. 2. Chart of Ecommerce dominance.  
The Economist. Retrieved March 11, 2021. [2]

As a result of this outsized influence, cultivating popularity amongst both the United States and China is essential for any major international corporation to succeed. Amazon. Inc, ranked as the second biggest corporation in the world [2], is no exception. As a result, the Amazon website experience shows significant differences between their versions made for China and the United States.

## **Purpose**

In order to explore how differences between the United States and Chinese culture could influence corporate strategy, we will be comparing the differences in Amazon's primary website design in China and in the United States. The purpose of this report is to analyze how Amazon's website design differences reflect cultural norms between the two countries, measured through Hofstede's cultural dimensions of individualism, long term orientation, and indulgence.

## **Hypothesis**

Based on Hofstede insights' country comparison graph (Fig. 3, introduced in the next section), the US and China ecommerce user bases are vastly different in what they value. In order to remain competitive in both markets, the two versions of Amazon's website will have a significant amount of design differences in a way that corresponds with Hofstede's graph of cultural differences.

## **Overview**

Through our primary research on our selected cultural dimensions of individualism, long term orientation, and indulgence between the United States and China, we hypothesize that the two website versions will reflect Hofstede's principles and show significant differences in design. We discuss the literature review of these three principles, methods for analyzing website design, our results, a discussion, and our conclusion with recommendations.

**LITERATURE  
REVIEW**

**METHODS**

**RESULTS**

**CONCLUSION**



## Literature Review

This report will introduce the key differences of Amazon from the United States and China by analyzing through three cultural dimensions: individualism vs. collectivism, indulgence vs. restraint, and short term pragmatism vs. long-term orientation. Fig.2 shows the Hofstede insights' country comparison across six cultural dimensions of the United States and China.

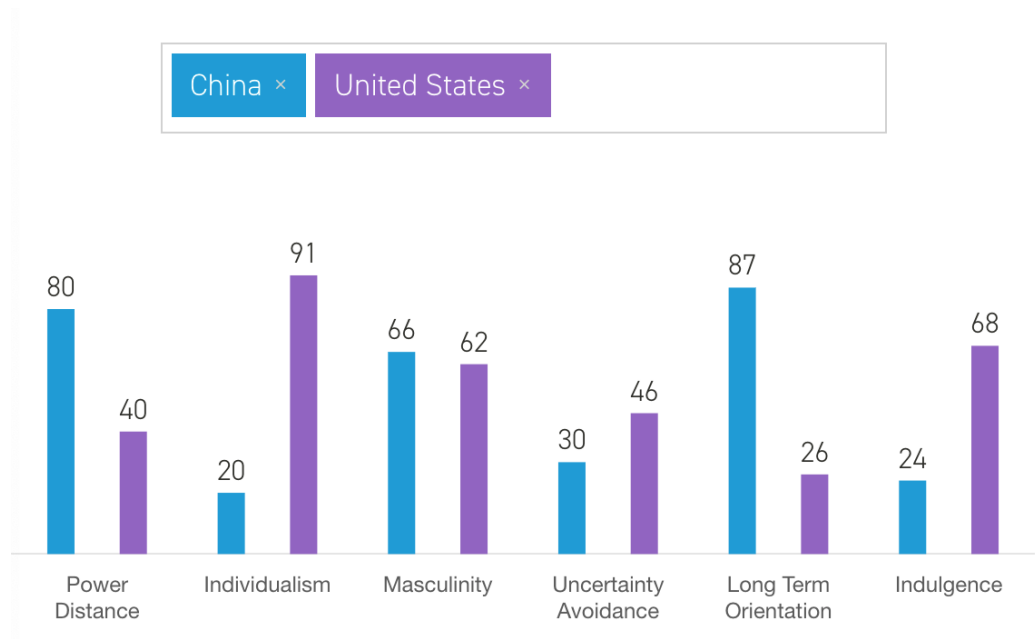


Fig. 3. Hofstede insights' country comparison across six cultural dimensions

### Individualism

Individualism is described as the culture that focuses on the needs of an individual over the needs of the group as a whole. In this type of culture, people are seen as independent and autonomous, and tend to care only for themselves and families. Social behavior tends to be dictated by the attitudes and preferences of individuals [3]. In such cultures, being dependent on others too much is shameful. Cultures in North America and Western Europe are more likely to be individualistic.

On the other hand, collectivism tends to emphasize on the needs of groups of people as a whole over the needs of individuals. In such cultures, relationships with other members of the group and the interconnectedness between people play a central role in each person's identity [4]. People are encouraged not to be selfish for the wellbeing of society as a whole. Cultures in Asia, Central America, South America, and Africa tend to be more collectivistic.



## **Indulgence**

Indulgence is described as a society with free gratification of basics and human drives of enjoyment and fun. It indicates whether behaviors and actions are motivated by basic human drives or whether they are controlled. A high score of indulgence shows that members' actions are driven by their instincts and their feeling of enjoyment [5]. Countries in North America, South America, and Australia tend to be high indulgence cultures.

On the other hand, restraint is described as the control of those human drives based on social norms. Social norms can be strict to a point where expression of enjoyment leads to criticism in extreme cases. In general, enjoying life and having fun is the essence of indulgence and its absence is filled by duty in a society with low indulgence [5]. Countries in Asia and Eastern Europe tend to be high restraint cultures.

## **Long term orientation**

Long Term Orientation (LTO) focuses on the connection between a country's association with its past and its current activity and the challenges it faces. A national culture with a lower rating, or short term pragmatism, such as Canada, UK, USA, and Philippines, maintains its connectedness with its past traditions and holds steadfastness in high regard. These cultures tend to view change with suspicion, preserve norms and traditions, and to choose the normative instead.

A country with a higher rating, such as China, Japan, and South Korea, tends to have a future oriented perspective and encourage pragmatic innovation and adaptation. Truth is dependent on situations. These cultures urge for immediate results, and see modern education as a necessity for future success [6].

## **PART 3**

### **Methods**

This report analyzes cultural differences between Amazon websites from the United States and China, with websites <https://www.amazon.com> and <https://www.amazon.cn>, respectively. The two websites both have certain features that are associated with the three cultural dimensions from the above section: individualism vs collectivism, indulgence vs restraint, and short term pragmatism vs long term orientation

## **Individualism**

Hofstede defines individualism as measuring the degree of interdependence a society maintains among its members. To measure individualism, the amount of uses of “you” and “your” on the two websites were counted. The goal was to see how the websites treated the consumers as whether a single user or a collective group of users, since a higher number of the uses of the word “you” would indicate a more individualistic perspective.

Individualism was also measured by counting the number of individuals on product pictures on the two websites’ clothing section since they are great examples of products with consumers. The higher number of individuals in the pictures would show individualism and the lower would show collectivism.

## **Indulgence**

Indulgence is defined as free gratification of basics and human drives of enjoyment and fun. Indulgence was first measured by the amount of times a product has a price on the home screen. More information about price would show people tend to make decisions more carefully and less price information would show people tend to be more impulsive about the product when buying stuff.

Our second measurement was the amount of recommendations offered on both websites’ home page. A high amount of recommendation would more likely to show impulsive consuming habits of buying goods, not needs, which is focusing on more enjoyment and fun; whereas a lower amount of recommendations would show consumers are more likely to focus on their needs, which is a more practical consuming behavior.

## **Long term orientation**

Long term orientation is defined as the connection between a country’s association with its past and its current activity and the future challenges it will face. To measure LTO, a count was taken of the amount of promotions and discounts on both websites’ home page. More promotions and discounts would indicate that the selling companies want a long relationship with the consumers by offering them goods with lower prices.

Also, the amount of recommendation of current trending products can also measure LTO. The website with more current trending products recommendations would apparently show short-term consuming behaviors whereas little or no current trending products recommendations would show an emphasis on timeless and consistent shopping experiences.

## Screenshots used

# Home Page

## China

Beauty / Personal Health  
Kitchenware / Home  
Toys / mother and baby  
Computer / office / stationery  
Outdoor sport  
Mobile phone / photography / digital  
Electronic accessories / smart life  
Food / Nutrition  
Home appliances / home improvement  
Games / Entertainment / Musical Instruments  
Watches / Jewelry  
All Categories

**CLARKS**  
119元起

Treasure of Today's Town Store  
prime  
Prime会员专享

Direct mail toys purchased overseas  
¥205.63

Kindle e-books have a limited time and a good price  
邂逅女性力量  
好书0.99元起

下载Kindle APP  
立返66元书券  
查询阅读记录

今日特价  
电子书3.99元起  
24小时限时秒杀

KU包月服务  
低至9.99元/月

Overseas Purchase Town Store  
category  
1/6 page

Treasure of the town shop  
¥75.20-¥346.00  
End within 5 days  
NYX popular makeup goddess price  
★★★★☆ 152

Treasure of the town shop  
¥64.78-¥2,016.89  
End in 2 days  
Japanese exquisite kitchen and bathroom special  
★★★★★ 17

Treasure of the town shop  
¥51.89-¥416.27  
End in 2 days  
Surprise price of best-selling health products  
★★★★☆ 74

Treasure of the town shop  
¥142.11-¥2,391.90  
End in 2 days  
High-end big-name kitchen and bathroom appliances  
★★★★★ 1

Fig. 4. Amazon.cn. Home screen. (Retrieved March 10-11, 2021.)

## US

Ring Video Doorbell  
"Alexa, show me the front door."

Shop with coins  
coinstar  
Beyond the coin  
Learn more

This week's most-loved  
Shop all

Keep up with Alexa:  
February edition  
Learn more about what's new

Sign in for the best experience  
Sign in securely

Do more in 2021 with Alexa  
Shop now

Sponsored

Celebrate St. Patrick's Day Save on all things green

Makeup & Accessories  
Celebration Supplies  
Home  
Handmade  
Snacks  
Apparel

Everyday essentials you might like

Fig. 5. Amazon.com. Home screen. (Retrieved March 10-11, 2021.)

# Clothing Section

US

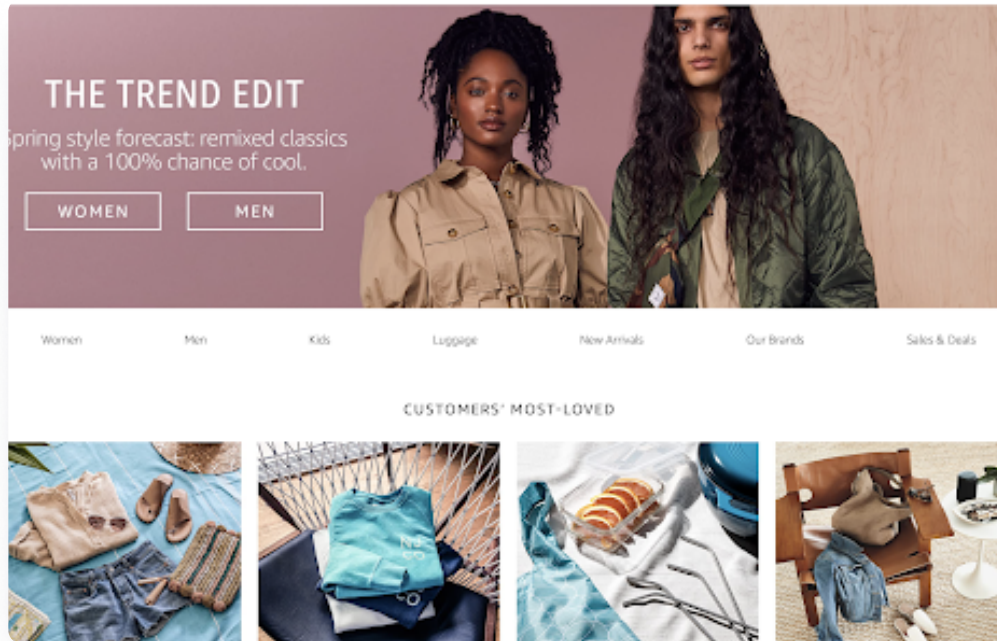


Fig. 6. Amazon.com. Clothing screen. (Retrieved March 10-11, 2021.)

China



Fig. 7. Amazon.cn. Clothing screen. (Retrieved March 10-11, 2021.)




# Recommendations

## China


Buy Z cost-effective overseas

Is snapping up | coming soon | It's over | Your concern category ▾


1/ 573 pages




¥142.03-¥650.29  
ZOJIRUSHI Promotion  
★★★★☆ 301



¥47.80-¥307.62  
Pearl Metal Muji Style Home Promotion



¥94.56-¥894.61  
Columbia and other spring jackets  
★★★★★ 1




¥2,361.33  
Delongji/Nestlé popular coffee machine  
Sold and delivered by Amazon UK  
★★★★☆ 52

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Overseas purchase praise zone

Is snapping up | coming soon | It's over | Your concern category ▾


1/ 604 pages




Treasure of the town shop  
¥75.20-¥346.00  
End in 3 days  
NYX popular makeup goddess price  
★★★★☆ 152



Treasure of the town shop  
¥41.94-¥123.81  
End in 3 days  
L'Oreal|Maybelline goddess price arrives  
★★★★☆ 37




Treasure of the town shop  
¥88.16  
End in 3 days  
Garnier Colorful Mask Series  
Sold and delivered by Amazon UK




Treasure of the town shop  
¥76.12-¥145.41  
the remaining time: 4:42:53  
Tisserand Aromatherapy Dream Bath

Fig. 8. Amazon.cn. Clothing screen. (Retrieved March 10-11, 2021.)

## US

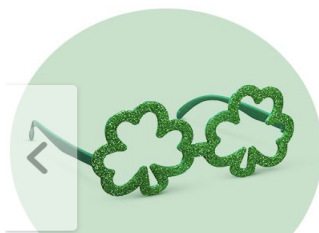


**Trending now**  
Retro sneakers, from colorful to classic fashion




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Celebrate St. Patrick's Day Save on all things green



Makeup & Accessories



Celebration Supplies



Home

Fig. 9. Amazon.com. Clothing screen. (Retrieved March 10-11, 2021.)

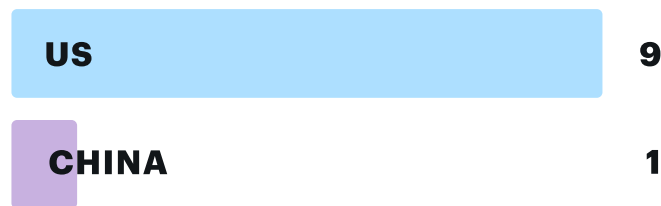
## Results

Using our methods outlined above, several pages across both websites were analyzed using Hofstede’s principles of individualism, indulgence, and long term orientation.

### Individualism

Individualism #1

## Amount of times words “you” or “your” is used in website copy



Pages included: sign up, log in, home

As shown in Fig.8, the US Amazon website showed a strong sense of individualism by using the word “you” and “your” 9 times while the Chinese Amazon website only used once throughout the sign up/log in menu and the home page.

Also, the Chinese Amazon website shows a total of 92 people on their clothing products whereas the US website shows a total of 17 people within approximately the same amount of web pages. The data shows an apparent result of the US being a more individualistic culture and China being a more collectivistic culture.

Individualism #2

## Faces used in product photos



Pages included: sign up, log in, home

## Indulgence

Indulgence #1

### Amount of prices listed together with products

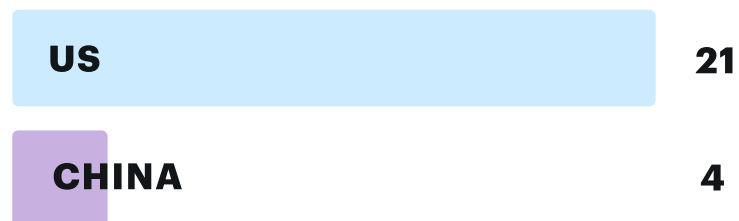


Pages included: Home

As shown in Fig.11, the US Amazon website showed a strong sense of indulgence by not having any prices listed on the home page while the Chinese Amazon website 15 times the price is mentioned for a product.

Indulgence #2

### Amount of sections for product recommendations



Pages included: Home

Also, the US Amazon website shows a total of 21 different categories of products listed on the homepage for recommendation whereas the Chinese website shows only 4 categories within approximately the same amount of web pages. The data shows an apparent result of the US is more indulgence based when shopping online.

**Long term orientation**

Long term orientation #1

## Amount of promotions, discounts

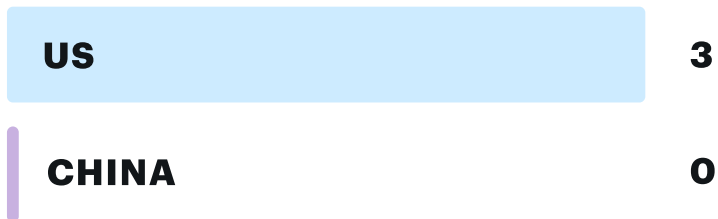


Pages included: Home

As shown in Fig.13, the Chinese Amazon website showed a strong sense of a long-term orientation first by having 9 promotions to build relationships with consumers and discounts on its homepage while the US website only had 1.

Long term orientation #2

## Amount of recommendations to “trending” products



Pages included: Home

Also, the US Amazon website showed several recommendations of the current trending products whereas the Chinese website didn't. Apparently, the US Amazon is more short-term oriented and the Chinese Amazon is more long-term oriented.



## Discussion

Although some design differences between the Chinese and United States version of Amazon were clear at the outset of this research, the results were very illuminating in providing more context between several of our initial questions.

Our initial hypotheses were that the US and China ecommerce customer bases were extremely different from each other in what they value about a successful brand. We also hypothesized that Amazon’s website would have design differences that reflect the three cultural dimensions of individualism, long term orientation, and indulgence.

## Individualism

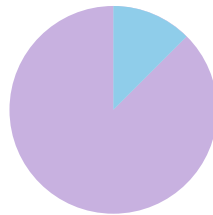
Our first result taught us that the Amazon US speaks to the user with the word, “you.” Most of Amazon’s US version of UX writing included addressing the user directly, in second person tense. However, in China, most labels avoided any sort of address, and if included, tended to use the word “my.”

### Our data

Approximated value derived from our data

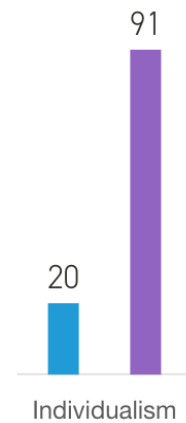
#### Individualism score

US 82% CHINA 18%



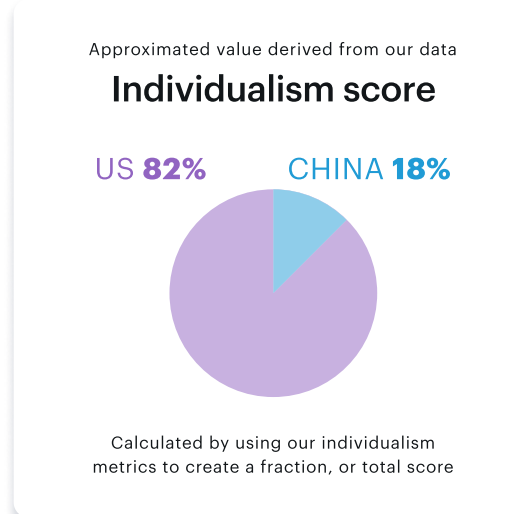
Calculated by using our individualism metrics to create a fraction, or total score

### Hofstede

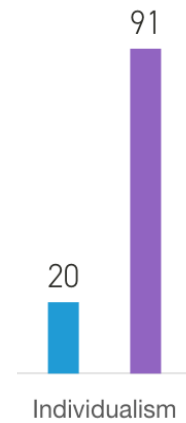


## Indulgence

### Our data



### Hofstede



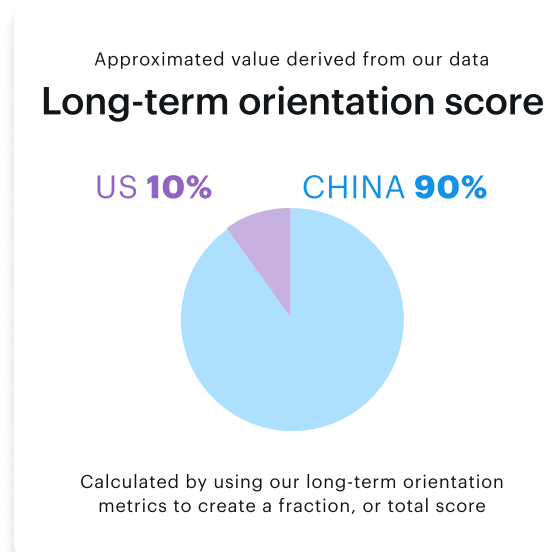
Our first result was that Amazon U.S. doesn't list any prices along with the products on its homepage. We believe that not listing the prices was a design decision that prioritizes short term satisfaction over a long term relationship, as the designers are assuming that people don't need to see a price at the first glance.

They're implicitly assuming that price isn't a primary concern to most people, as just a picture should be sufficient to know if you like a product or not. To us, avoiding showing any good deals, promotions, or discounts, is definitely a major sign of a culture that prioritizes the short term over the long term.

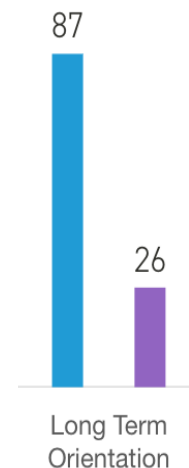
## Long term orientation

Our first takeaway was that Amazon U.S. doesn't really advertise when something is a good deal, but Amazon China does. China's Amazon page had far more references to promotions, discounts, limited-time buying while something is at a good deal, etc. To us, these web behaviors indicate a culture that values pragmatism.

### Our data



### Hofstede



## **Conclusion and recommendations**

In conclusion, Amazon successfully implemented Hofstede's principles of individualism, indulgence, and long-term orientation in both websites of the United States and China. The two websites indeed showed significant differences in design. The data have shown that the US is associated with individualism, indulgence, and short-term orientation while the Chinese Amazon website contains elements showing a culture of collectivism, restraint, and long-term orientation. These significant differences in website design reflected a difference in consuming behaviors from different cultures.

## **Recommendations**

We recommend continuing implementing the cultural adaptations in other countries in the future as well since the designs are successful for the US and China. Culture and location factors can be far too complex to succeed with a design as an outsider so always find customers, SMEs, researchers, etc, center those with the experiences and not following the traditional western standards. Also we recommend testing usability of both websites regularly to increase individuals using experiences. Overall, Amazon is successful with the US and China and should continue as expanding markets in the future.

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Fig. 3. Hofstede insights' country comparison across six cultural dimensions

Fig. 4. Amazon.cn. Home screen. (Retrieved March 10-11, 2021.)

Fig. 5. Amazon.com. Home screen. (Retrieved March 10-11, 2021.)

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